

# Wounded whale found dead on Greek island

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Experts 'did everything humanly possible to save' the whale, the government said.

A young whale that washed up near Athens last week was found dead on a nearby island Wednesday despite "superhuman" efforts to save the wounded animal, the Greek government said.

The male Cuvier's beaked whale was first found on a beach south of the

Greek capital late last week. Experts quickly gave it hydration and antibiotics before returning it to the sea on Friday evening.

The dolphin-like whale had a badly wounded lower jaw, however, which experts said was likely made by a ship's propellers, and hopes were not high for its survival.

A coastguard boat looking out for the whale found its remains Wednesday on the eastern coast of Salamis Island, west of Athens, the environment ministry said.

A team of veterinarians and experts recovered the whale to carry out tests to determine whether it had any disease or injury of public significance, the ministry said.

"Despite the superhuman efforts made since last Friday by the coastguard and navy divers as well as specialised veterinarians, nurses and volunteers... unfortunately the young whale did not survive," deputy environment minister Georgios Amyras said.

"From the first clinical and blood tests that were carried out on the whale, we knew that the results were not encouraging, but we did everything humanly possible to save it."

Before the whale's death, the Archipelago Institute of Marine Conservation said returning it to the sea was a "mistake".

"It was a decision against all protocol and logic, given that it was sick and had multiple injuries," it said on Tuesday.

The Greek NGO also lamented the "lack of adequate infrastructure to care for marine animals in Greece" and criticised the "huge mobilisation and noise" caused by non-specialists who remained near the beached

whale for several hours.

Although sightings of live whales are extremely unusual in Athens, whale carcasses occasionally wash up, mainly on the Greek islands.

Cuvier's beaked whales, which can grow up to seven metres (23 feet) long, often fall prey to ship propellers but are also acutely sensitive to "noise pollution" from human activity, Natascha Komninou, a professor at the University of Thessaloniki, told Skai TV.

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